

Chair's Annual Report August 2020-July 2021

By the time of our delayed AGM last summer we had been in various degrees of lockdown since mid-March and were looking forward to coming out the other side. Unfortunately, this did not prove to be the case (other than for a few weeks), but the amazing up swell in volunteering and community focus continued through the autumn and winter. Neighbours continued to help neighbours; street groups, schools and churches supported those in need – and this continues today. In particular I would mention:

- the [Norwood and Brixton Foodbank](#) which has continued to feed vast numbers of people; they often have needs for a particular food or hygiene product or a gap has arisen in their volunteer ranks and you can keep up to date with their news by subscribing to their newsletter, and/or make a donation.
- [Community TechAid](#) (formerly Lambeth TechAid) which has gone from strength to strength over the past year. Community TechAid is a south London charity helping to bridge the digital divide by providing information technology and the skills to use it to those without. Working with over 70 Lambeth based organisations, they collect computers, tablets and mobile phones that people no longer need, remove all data and refurbish the devices, so they are in good working order and ready to deliver to people in need. We provide segregated banking services, and in the early days supported them build local connections and with promotion.
- [Station to Station](#), our local Business Improvement District, which has and continues to provide essential Covid-19 practical advice and support to local shops and other businesses trying to weather the storm of uncertainties as the national and local lockdown status changed up and down.



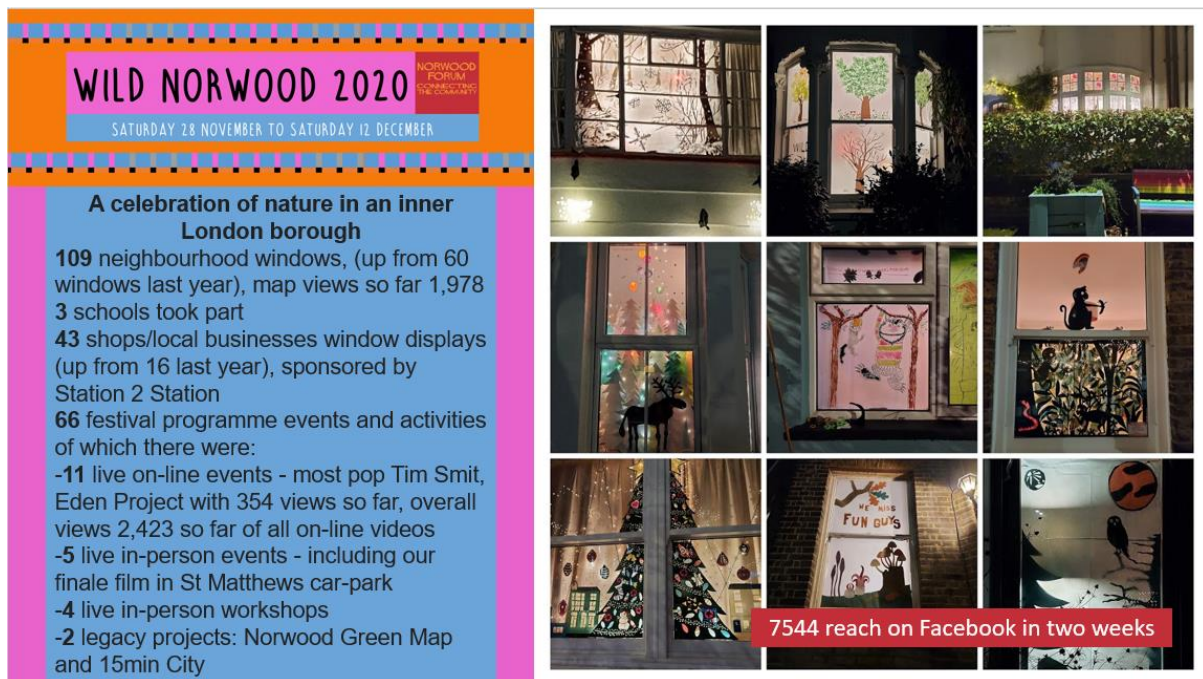
The Coronavirus section on our website (www.norwoodforum.org) has been kept up to date with accurate support and advice signposting on lockdown rules and guidance, vaccine roll-outs, testing and surge testing. We maintained a regular e-newsletter to keep the community up-to-date on local developments, which we also shared across our social media channels. We held a virtual Norwood Collective Community Support meeting on 1 October attended by 20 groups and organisations to share knowledge and contacts as we moved into

Lockdown 2. The Forum now attends a monthly Community Networking Breakfast meeting, run along similar lines, hosted by two of local NHS Link Workers.

As a group, in the absence of face-to-face collaboration, we continued with online committee meetings, and have hosted on-line meetings for a number of groups including the [Friends of West Norwood Cemetery](#) and the organisers of [#ScrapTheYard](#) (more on that below). We also host the monthly [Lambeth Forum Network](#) meetings.

NORWOOD FORUM CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY

In the summer of 2020 we initiated the concept of public Community Conversations, and have so far held four. Our first was on 1 June and focussed on the challenges as the community took its first steps out of (what became our first) lockdown. Our second was on 6 July and with a group of invited guests discussed 'Clean Air and Quiet Neighbourhoods'. Our third on 14 August formed part of our delayed, virtual AGM with Helen Hayes, MP for Dulwich and West Norwood as our speaker, and our fourth was held on 8 December as part of Wild Norwood 2020 and discussed the concept of the 15min neighbourhood with a group of invited guests. These were all livestreamed events for anyone to view on Facebook (and the videos remain to view on our Facebook page). Together all four have received 2,444 views.



WILD NORWOOD 2020
SATURDAY 28 NOVEMBER TO SATURDAY 12 DECEMBER

A celebration of nature in an inner London borough

109 neighbourhood windows, (up from 60 windows last year), map views so far 1,978
3 schools took part
43 shops/local businesses window displays (up from 16 last year), sponsored by Station 2 Station
66 festival programme events and activities of which there were:

- 11 live on-line events - most pop Tim Smit, Eden Project with 354 views so far, overall views 2,423 so far of all on-line videos
- 5 live in-person events - including our finale film in St Matthews car-park
- 4 live in-person workshops
- 2 legacy projects: Norwood Green Map and 15min City

7544 reach on Facebook in two weeks

Our second [#WildNorwood2020](#) Festival, a celebration of nature in an inner London borough, was held for two weeks this year between 28 November and 12 December 2020, building on the success of the 2019 Window Wanderland. Up from 60 windows in 2019, 109 windows were installed in the local area (homes, shops and other buildings). Three schools took part: Oakmead Preparatory (first time), Rosemead Preparatory (second time) and Rosendale Primary (first time). There were 43 shops and local businesses window displays (up from 16), sponsored by Station to Station. The online map was viewed 1978 times (as of mid-December 2020).

The local partners for the festival were:

- South London Botanical Institute: programmed 2 live on-line talks, 2 live in-person workshops and 1 live in-person open garden event.
- London Wildlife Trust: their own Great North Wood mini-festival coincided with our dates and we shared resources and cross promoted.
- South London Theatre: funded the festival film finale as part of their outreach programme. Their funding paid for hiring equipment and expertise from the Free Film Festival organisation.
- St Matthews RC Church: supplied for free the church car park and other facilities for the open-air festival finale film.

NORWOOD FORUM CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY

- West Norwood Feast: supplied for free 3 gazebos to keep the film equipment dry for the finale film.
- Station to Station: funded the themed retail window display and provided general promotional support
- Movers & Makers: ran two family workshops during West Norwood Feast
- West Norwood Library and Picturehouse: allowed use of their main windows for the large window display, as they did for the 2019 festival.
- Open Orchard: ran a live in-person, physically distanced, St Martin's lantern walk around the neighbourhood - this included links to on how to make your lantern beforehand, and singing traditional songs. This is a German/European tradition celebrating St Martin, the Roman soldier turned saint for sharing his coat with a beggar and marks the beginning of winter
- Gerry Lyseight: curated the festival sound track
- Bookseller Crow: bookshop supplied 3 copies of each book from our author speakers at a discount. 15 books in total were 'set free' into the neighbourhood for people to discover, read and 'set free' again.
- Salvation Army, St Lukes Church, West Norwood Station: gave permission for a festival banner to be displayed on their railings.
- Southside Rehabilitation Association Copy Shop: numerous discounts on printing and copying
- London Living Streets: provided free walking route maps for the Forum to give away at their Feast stall; also supporting the 15min City initiative.
- Brixton Buzz: 2 special feature articles.

and many others too numerous to mention. All videos remain online on the Norwood Forum Facebook page [@TheNorwoodForum](https://www.facebook.com/TheNorwoodForum)



Our tagline is 'Connecting the Community' and at the end of 2020 we were able to award grants to a range of community groups in Norwood. The maximum grant for any single project was £300:

1. Open Orchard Project: creation of new orchard to be utilised and looked after by the local community: protective metal cages and timber posts
2. Hugo Harrison Limited: free cargo bike deliveries aiming to change attitudes and build sustainable local business
3. The Stitch: necessary to vacate Portico Gallery, new storage shelves and boxes for new donated storage location
4. Norwood Pensioners Group: to underwrite costs of classes from January 2021 while attendance is built back.
5. Nature Vibezzz: outdoor learning/Forest School trip for school aged children residents of Fern Lodge Estate during February half term w/c 15 February 2021.

NORWOOD FORUM CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY

6. Nature Vibezz: two Forest School sessions for local Childminders network: beginning of 2021 school term (w/c 4 January 2021) and upon return from February half term (w/c 22 February 2021).
7. Salvation Army: heating/water costs for weekly youth sessions
8. Friends of West Norwood station: bee & bug and bird boxes; masonry paint for Hannen Road wall
9. Movers & Makers C.I.C: kids holiday camp in school holidays at Rosendale Community Centre
10. Movers & Makers C.I.C: West Norwood Feast craft and play activities – April-June 2021
11. South London Botanical Institute: create a series of workshops for children/young people with learning difficulties or in need of mental health support
12. South London Botanical Institute: printed flyer 'Five Ways to Enjoy Nature this Winter' distributed across three wards - practical ideas for getting outdoors and enjoying local urban green spaces under Covid-19 restrictions
13. 4ALL - Building Community in West Dulwich: youth club outing to theatre
14. Network Norwood: Coffee Connectors, a pilot event - information on local activities and services as a coffee morning at Cheviot Gardens Housing
15. Lambeth TechAid: to refurbish, update and make safe as many devices as possible

Many of the grant recipients will be joining us at our Norwood Community Fair and AGM on Saturday 3 July.

NORWOOD COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

A major focus of our 'Connecting the Community' work continues to be the Norwood Community Safety Partnership. However, attempts to organise meetings of

the Community Safety Partnership during the Covid Lockdown often revealed that most potential participants were unable/unwilling to attend Zoom because of overload, including home schooling. The Police Safer Neighbourhood Partnerships, GP Patient Practice Groups, Primary Care Engagement Groups and most Schools have had similar problems. Information on what was happening with regard to access to local services, before this became available from other sources, was however, gratefully received. So too were links to guidance and resources not otherwise signposted or updated as they changed. This has included the LGfL "[Bridge the Divide Programme](#)" (to make best use of donations and/or equipment), the [ACRE guidance on multi-use community facilities](#) and [NCSC guidance regarding on-line safety and security](#).

As activities begin to restart after lockdown the focus has been on helping publicise what is planned or available locally, particularly with regard to health, welfare and youth engagement activities such as the creation of the Hill Brook and Dale Patient Engagement Groups (covering two thirds of local residents) and [Lambeth Summer Camp](#) organised by the Police and hosted by [St Martins Academy Tulse Hill](#).



As the annual Norwood Pensioners Group Christmas Party had to be cancelled, our usual support for this event was used instead to put together 250 Christmas boxes which were delivered to nine local groups for distribution. They included a community Christmas card commissioned from local artist Katy Edelsten who kindly donated her time and talent to this project. The boxes were gratefully received by all.

NORWOOD FORUM

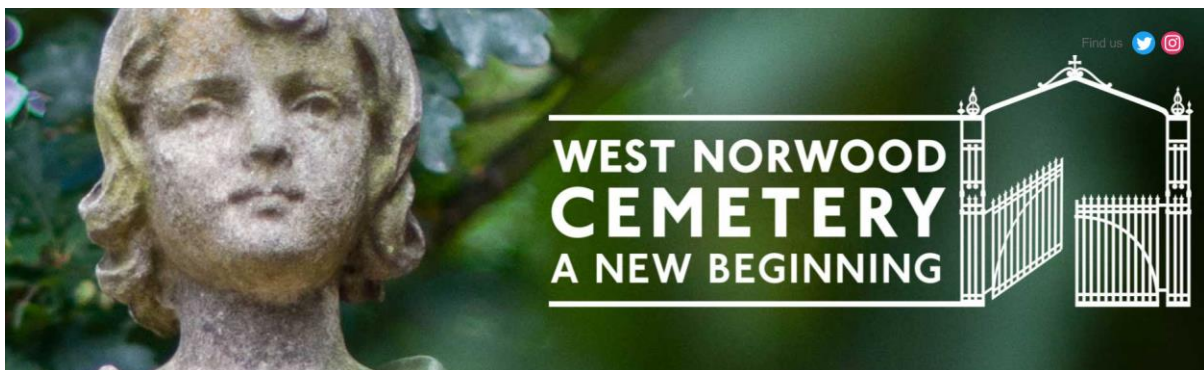
CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY

After a period of nearly two years and after considerable lobbying, we have recently managed to revive the [Streetworks project](#) with Lambeth Council. Norwood Road itself is now in a shocking state of disrepair after the Thames Water mains replacement works and UKPN works, as well as the lengthy period of little maintenance. Resurfacing works are now programmed for the summer period, and we are actively working with Lambeth on the remaining unfinished projects – to be completed over the coming months:

- TfL Road Safety Audit review outcomes - includes tweaking of implemented scheme to remove dangerous aspects, and install pedestrian priority markings on side roads
- Diagonal crossing at York Hill/Lancaster Avenue
- Car parking places - a series of adjustments and extra provision
- Street furniture: benches and chairs
- Norwood Road (Tulse Hill) railway bridge lighting; mural maintenance and info plaque.

We have been pleased to work with Station to Station and SLBI to install some greening measures (as trees could not be planted).

The news on the second phase of the Streetworks project, the removal of the Tulse Hill gyratory, is less good. TfL's funding crisis means the project cannot be funded for some years to come. We will shortly be publishing a statement from the Council laying out the current situation along with our plans for a community driven project to improve the local environment more immediately.



We are extremely pleased to now see the Council making progress on the ground with implementing the National Heritage Lottery Fund West Norwood Cemetery improvements in tandem with the Friends and the wider local community. Just under £7m is being invested in the Cemetery to conserve heritage monuments, provide new pedestrian entrances, undertake infrastructure repairs, provide a visitor centre and fund a volunteer and activities programme. The current ongoing works are to improve drainage and resurface key pathways.

In the late summer of 2020 we installed 21 Blue Plaques illustrating some of our rich local history. Phase two will follow in the coming weeks.



NORWOOD FORUM

CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY

And our regular work includes the following:

Coronavirus, Census, National and Local Elections

The Forum receives direct and regular information regarding all of these three important areas. This is all published on our website and then shared across all our social media channels as appropriate. Particular focus has been on: pop-up vaccination stations and the surge testing, Census completion, and advice on how to register to vote and to receive a postal vote.

Planning Applications

Norwood Forum is a registered planning consultee and receives notice direct from Lambeth on every planning application that is made for properties in the three wards that we cover. We share these with Norwood Action Group with whom we have a joint sub-committee that considers every single one, and makes joint and separate responses where appropriate in collaboration with interested groups such as residents associations where relevant.

Representation

The Forum is represented on the following groups: Lambeth Food Hub Network, Lambeth Digital Inclusion Network, Lambeth Voluntary Community Sector Partnership Group, West Norwood Cemetery Heritage Lottery Fund Implementation Board, Lambeth Safer Neighbourhood Board, Lambeth Youth Safety Network, and Lambeth Prevent Advisory Group. The Forum is a long standing member of Lambeth Forum Network and has recently joined Lambeth Local History Forum.

Consultation

We also promote community participation, and make our own response, to Lambeth Council and other organisations consultations including Safer Streets for Schools, Ward Boundaries, Lambeth Local Plan, West Norwood Conservation Area Character Appraisal and many others.

Other one off projects have included a review of local war memorials to commemorate Remembrance Sunday, a round-up of Christmas Services in December and half-term activity listings in May.

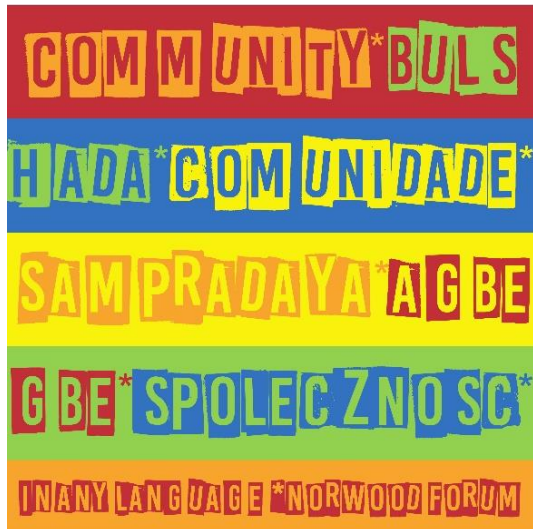
OUR COMMUNITY YOUR FORUM

The above illustrates just some of our contributions and partnership working with many local groups. We are grateful for all their work to improve our local area, and look forward to this continuing in the year ahead. We hope you will all continue to use our website: www.norwoodforum.org as a resource of local news and especially live events as we all look forward to our thriving local cultural scene returning post-COVID-19. We publish a fortnightly e-newsletter which is also posted across our social media platforms, and an (almost) daily post on social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram: @TheNorwoodForum) highlighting a news or event from our website. We are also regularly at West Norwood Feast.

Looking forward and despite the difficult times ahead we will continue to work on promoting cultural and heritage projects, planning, green issues and as it says on the tin, 'Connecting the Community'.

NORWOOD FORUM

CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY



We instigated a small new initiative earlier this year 'Community – in any language' as the precursor to a more focussed plan to improve and increase the depth of our reach and genuine engagement with everyone who lives, works or studies in Norwood.

We established a working relationship with the Lambeth Portuguese Wellbeing Partnership and Lambeth based Blind Aid through building our Coronavirus support and help resources on our website, and will be actively looking to make more connections with other language specific community facing groups in the next twelve months.

Can I thank all those on the Committee and our administrator who have worked so enthusiastically to ensure that as a group we can make a difference.

Penultimately, I want to record our thanks to our outgoing Chair Sunil de Sayrah who moved out of London after Christmas and stepped down at the end of March 2021. We were able to give him a rousing send off on Zoom at our March Committee meeting, including a virtual leaving card and a number of anecdotes of his activity. He is sorely missed by us and we are sure the West Norwood community.



Lastly, Norwood Forum has recently been hosting community meetings to organise the campaign against the Southwark Metals application to site a scrap metal yard at Windsor Grove. #ScrapTheYard

The application has been amended twice, necessitating freshly advertised applications and the local community to make fresh objections - no doubt in the hope of wearing us all down. These tactics have not been successful, as illustrated by the public demonstration of over 200 people on 27 May.

Helen Hayes, MP for Dulwich and West Norwood spoke to the gathering: 'Windsor Grove is a completely unacceptable location for a large metal recycling facility, which would bring more than 100 trucks a day down this narrow cul-de-sac. I have written to

NORWOOD FORUM

CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY


Lambeth Council with all of the Labour ward councillors on behalf of local residents to object in the strongest possible terms. This application must be rejected.'


As I write the advertised closing date for formal objections has passed but objections can still be made and we still await a date for consideration of the application by Lambeth's Planning Applications Committee. Please Object (to the application), Sign (the petition) and Share (the information with everyone you know). All the information you need can be found here: www.norwoodforum.org/scraptheyard and follow the campaign on social media here:


#ScrapTheYard

1: Object
2: Sign
3: Share

Please join the community campaign to stop Southwark Metals moving into West Norwood - impacting lives and businesses across Lambeth - and beyond
Info all on Facebook @ScrapTheYard

 @ScrapTheYard

 @ScrapTheYard_WN

 @ScrapTheYard

Kim Hart
Acting Chair
11 June 2021

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